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Glen Williams

Texas A&M University

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[En]visioning Success: The Anatomy and Functions of Vision in the Basic Course

Glen Williams

When our curriculum and pedagogy came under fire from one in our discipline (Michael Burgoon) who insisted upon "divorcing dame speech" (1989, p. 303), Rod Hart (1993) answered with a written version of a keynote he had delivered to the Western States' Convention, proclaiming our endeavors "the ultimate people-making discipline" (p. 101). Hart championed our offerings, noting that "those who teach interpersonal communication . . . teach that lovers can better love and families can become more familiar if they are sensitive to what they say. Those who teach public address and media studies teach that social power can be shifted and public visions exalted if people learn to think well and speak well. Those who teach performance studies teach that even the most cold-blooded text can be thawed out by the warmth of a human voice" (p. 102). With regard to public speaking, Hart emphasized that such instruction was vital to our political well-being, empowering us to influence others as well as to equip us with "the mental agility to listen between others' lines when they speak and to remember her or his own bottom line when responding to them" (p. 103). For these reasons, Hart contended: "Communication will be the most important subject taught in the latter part of the twentieth century" (p. 101).

Jo Sprague (1993) also answered Michael Burgoon's diatribe, particularly his claims that "theory and research in communication" had "far outstripped what is presently being taught in speech," and that "[the typical teacher of] SPEECH

does not embrace . . . a commitment to scholarship" and, moreover, exhibits "active resistance" to the scholarship that would inform instructional efforts (1989, p. 303). Sprague acknowledged the "gap between our theory and pedagogy," noting that Burgoon was not the first to call it to our attention (p. 109). Sprague also noted that the problem (in part) centered upon communication education having been marginalized, constituting an instance of what Ernest Boyer (1991a) critiqued as the misguided and unethical practice within higher education to privilege "one kind of scholarship over all other forms" (p. 109).

Sprague offered a corrective: "To reunite theory and pedagogy requires that virtually every member of the discipline consider communication education as a second or third area of professional commitment." She envisioned the results: "How enriched both our teaching and theorizing would be if all scholars agreed to contribute to the literature of this area from time to time, to read it often and to respond to it critically as they would to work in their own areas of specialization, and regularly to engage in intellectual discussions of teaching with their own colleagues and graduate students" (p. 114). In the final pages of the article, Sprague paves the way for such a discussion by noting a few ways in which our "pedagogical knowledge and curricular knowledge" could better reflect "the content knowledge of our discipline" (p. 115).

Both Hart and Sprague provide elements of a vision that values speech and that effectively answers concerns such as those importuned by Michael Burgoon and challenges his competing vision of speech as a "dame" whom scholars of communication should abandon. Hart eloquently reminds teachers of the basic course of their value and their mission. Sprague perceptively notes our trials but impresses upon us our responsibility, and she reminds the academic community, in general, of its accountability. Sprague envisions how well we, as a united discipline, can perform.

The exchange between these authors not only illustrates competing visions but also illuminates the various interconnected dimensions of the vision within which the director of the basic course must operate. The view of the course constitutes but one component; at least two other components exist. Directors also operate within a mind-set concerning the training and development of staff as well as within a view of pedagogical research. The director must attend to each of these components while attempting to orchestrate a healthy vision for the course. The overall goal is to facilitate a vision that training and development of the staff facilitates their professional growth and enables quality instruction and that effective training and development depends on scholarship that will inform those efforts.

Prior to discussing a fruitful vision for the basic course, however, this paper first explores the anatomy of a vision — its genesis and its makeup. Next, it probes the functions of vision, illuminating its power. Finally, the paper identifies elements central to a vision for the basic course. Clearly, a healthy vision is central to the success of the basic course, and the success of the course can enhance the standing of a department and ultimately that of the field.

THE ANATOMY OF A VISION

Scholars in speech communication who have contemplated "vision" and what it means naturally gravitate toward studies of management and leadership — which long have explored the role of vision in leadership. While explicating the role of vision in a rhetorical analysis of the 1992 presidential campaign, for example, Ronald F. Wendt and Gail T. Fairhurst (1994) employ models of charisma advanced in studies of organizational leadership to examine contemporary political leadership. These authors define vision as the "management of meaning" and explain that "to manage mean-

ing about future directions is also to create a set of expectations for behavior or action to follow" (p. 181). In scholarship pertaining to directing the basic course, Shelley Schaefer Hinck and Nancy L. Buerkel-Rothfuss (1993) likewise utilize a definition from leadership studies which describes vision as a "mental image of a possible and desired future state" (p. 124). The authors specify that once the director of the basic course has "identified her [or his] vision of the basic course," the director should then "set out to persuade the department faculty" that the vision is "a viable alternative to the old method" (p. 127).

These ideations are common to the scholarship pertaining to leadership. In a much-cited book on the subject, Burt Nanus (1992) identifies vision as an "articulation of a destination toward which your organization should aim, a future that in important ways is better, more successful, or more desirable for your organization than is present" (p. 8). In this manner, Nanus notes, the articulated vision offers a "realistic, credible, attractive future" which is "so energizing" that it "in effect jump-starts the future by calling forth the skills, talents, and resources to make it happen" (p. 8). Leaders whose effectiveness springs from offering an effective, compelling vision are identified as transformational leaders (Barge, 1994).

The predominant conception of vision as acquired from a compelling image articulated by a leader reflects traditional philosophies of rhetoric. For example, Aristotle (n.d./1991) taught that the speaker could motivate others by articulating images. He emphasized that the speaker would have to attend carefully to word choice, noting that "one word is more proper . . . to making the thing appear 'before the eyes'" (p. 225). Longinus (n.d./1957) also emphasized the power of words to capture the imagination, noting that if selected "brilliantly," language "almost stamps upon the words the very shape" (19) of that which it was describing, thus allowing the audience to "see it" (p. 23-24). Longinus qualified that the images would

need to be grounded in "actuality" and "probability" (p. 26). Cicero (n.d./1942) echoed Longinus, almost verbatim, noting that the "brilliant style" (p. 327) would make an audience feel that they had "actually" seen what was described. Francis Bacon (1605/1990) reflected these earlier views when he specified that rhetoric was "to apply Reason to Imagination for the better moving of the will" (p. 629). Bacon's definition implies that giving ideas vividness would move an audience by the apparent concreteness. George Campbell (1776/1963) held a similar view, writing that "great and noble images, which when in suitable colouring presented to the mind, do, as it were, distend the imagination with some vast conception, and quite ravish the soul" (p. 3). Campbell believed that vivacity, or the liveliness of ideas, was *central* to capturing attention, exciting passion, and compelling belief and action. Like Longinus, Cicero, and Bacon, Campbell was careful to instruct that the images presented would need to bear a "semblance of truth" (p. 33).

Traditional theories of rhetoric suggest that the reception of an idea will depend on eloquence and vividness, as well as whether the idea is plausible. Contemporary theories of rhetoric also direct any who would influence others to present their ideas vividly in conjunction with solid evidence and reasoning. Chaim Perelman (1982), for example, in discussing "presence," noted the power of a rhetor's language to "evoke" (p. 35) certain images in the mind of an audience which could affect both thought and disposition. Alan Monroe (1935) supplemented enduring wisdom with the findings of psychological studies, providing empirical data to support philosophers' observations that human motivation, to a significant degree, is affected by verbal visualization.

Both traditional and contemporary theories of rhetoric, then, (coupled with psychological studies) illuminate the anatomy of a vision. They suggest that the course director, as well as anyone who aspires to influence and lead, can make her or his ideas more appealing by providing adequate

support, sound reasoning, and by expressing those ideas with visual images that allow people to imagine how things are and how they can be. In this manner the rhetor helps the audience visualize what is being suggested and behold it as realistic and desirable/attainable or undesirable/preventable.

The Process of Visioning

Studies of leadership and conceptions of rhetoric provide but a partial understanding of vision. Although these studies illuminate the power of language to capture imagination and thereby evoke response, they oversimplify the process of visioning. These conceptions employ a linear model of communication when describing vision as originating with the leader who is able to articulate the vision in a manner that compels support (e.g., Conger, 1989; Fritz, 1986; Garner, 1989; Nanus, 1992). A few authors seem to employ a transactional model of communication (see Barnlund, 1970), implying that a vision is somewhat of a collaboration between leader and subordinates, but they fall short of explaining the process (e.g., Tichy & Devanna, 1986, p. 140; Jaffe, Scott, & Orioli, 1986, p. 97). Certainly, the leader's voice is an important voice, but the leader is not the sole author of a vision. Visioning is an intersubjective phenomenon; people do not merely buy into a vision but take a more active role in its genesis and evolution. This process is akin to that Kenneth Burke (1941/1973) explained which transpires with the reading of a poem: "The reader, in participating in the poem, breathes into this anatomic structure a new physiological vitality" (p. 90).

Contemporary studies in communication and rhetorical theory illuminate the dynamics of visioning. Most notably, Ernest G. Bormann provides insight into what comprises a vision and how it comes into being. After more than two decades of study, Bormann (1972, 1982, 1985, 1986; Bormann,

Cragan, & Sheilds, 1994; Bormann, 1995) continues to posit that visioning is a process in which the elements of a vision, articulated by various individuals, will "catch on and chain out" (1972, p. 398) and culminate into an overall vision. Bormann explains that within this process a group will recount positive and negative elements in their history in order to identify an ideal, yet attainable future. Some accounts will be "ignored," but others will "cause a greater or lesser symbolic explosion in the form of a chain reaction" (1995, p. 269).

Although visioning is a group process, leadership remains important. The leader, after all, likely is formally empowered. How she or he employs that power assumes increased importance. Visioning would seem to benefit from *participative leadership*, a style of leadership where the leader shares power by actively involving subordinates in identifying problems, envisioning and formulating solutions, making decisions, and by allowing individual freedom and access to information (Bass, 1990). Leaders can facilitate participation by employing communication that "promotes, sustains, and extends inquiry" (Salazar, 1995, p. 187). This communication can occur formally in meetings and informally through "small talk" (see Duck & Pond, 1989; Duck 1990). Ideally, the leader is adept at visioning both with words and deeds which serves to model, encourage, and inspire others to think critically and creatively and to share their ideas. As Hinck and Buerkel-Rothfuss (1993) note, it will be the task of the director to "coordinate a variety of perspectives" (117) into a "shared vision" of the course, and doing so will allow the course to be run more effectively and efficiently.

The process of visioning is ongoing and recursive. The vision will continue to evolve as members share and reflect upon information, and as they form, consider, and test new ideas. In addition, they will foresee and encounter challenges posed by external forces, such as the administration, technology, or demographics. Visioning, then, is a lively industry

with many elements to address and many forces and factors at work. To ensure their success a group must be attentive, imaginative, reflective, and enterprising.

In sum, traditional and contemporary theories of rhetoric, coupled with studies of leadership, yield a fuller understanding of both the anatomy of a vision and the process of visioning. Traditional accounts emphasize the role of language but limit the vision to one source. Studies in leadership likewise typically present a linear model. Clearly, the director must be proactive in crafting a vision. At the same time, though, contemporary theories of rhetoric suggest that ultimately a vision is authored by multiple voices and, hence, any formally designated leader should employ a participative style of leadership so to promote the process of visioning. Any member potentially can contribute an idea that will "catch on." An idea that is stated eloquently, persuasively, and vividly will gain better currency.

The Makeup of a Vision

Bormann affords us a more accurate definition of vision, though his explanation may require some revision. Bormann (1995) restricts messages within this process to "somewhere and/or sometime other than the here-and-now" (269). In contrast, Aristotle (n.d./1991) taught that what is envisioned "should be seen as being done rather than as in the future" (245). Burke (1950/1969b) echoes Aristotle when he observes that people influence others chiefly by identifying their "ways" (p. 55) with another, communicating similar images, attitudes, and ideas. Taken together, these views provide a broader understanding; vision is not bound by time but addresses both the past and future as well as the here-and-now.

Hence, much of what may be a compelling vision addresses what the group is about and are doing, not merely

what they have done or where they are going — a link Monroe (1935) made in describing the "visualization step." To have a vision is to visualize how things are and how they can be; it illuminates what is being done well, what needs to be done better, and what remains to be done. In other words, vision is not just for a future but for a state of being: what one should enact, i.e., attempt to "be" now. For example, with regard to the basic course, a statement pertaining to the here-and-now might be: "We're professionals providing quality exposure and experience in a course that is central to students' education."

The vision addresses not only the group but also the individual member. In terms of the individual, the vision could suggest the aspiration to be a good teacher, an active, contributing member of the staff, a good citizen in the department, and a scholar who enjoys the respect of students and colleagues alike. Vision, then, pertains to past, present, and future, and it also pertains to the group as a whole, as well as the individual member.

THE FUNCTIONS OF A VISION

The panoramic content of a vision illuminates its functions and its potential. Brown's (1990) discussion of the roles stories play in an organizational setting provides an analogue to the functions of a vision. A vision's constituent parts, like stories, clarify and familiarize. They promote bonding, inclusion, and identification that engenders group consciousness. They also provide direction, empower, and motivate, helping the group to excel. Although the functions of stories are roughly analogous to the functions of a vision, some noteworthy differences also exist. This section explores both.

Group Consciousness

As Bormann (1972) notes, a vision will "serve to sustain the members' sense of community" (398). The participative style of leadership inherent to the process of visioning will engender group consciousness. Leadership becomes "distributed leadership" (Huey, 1994, p. 42), with each member of the group expected to contribute to the enterprise and to own responsibility. As noted in studies of transformational leadership, such inclusion and participation should strengthen the cohesiveness of the group (Barge, 1994, pp. 55-56). In addition, since members participate in the process they are likely better able to explain, elaborate upon, and justify the vision. Furthermore, studies in leadership reveal that active involvement can enhance understanding, motivate compliance, and bolster morale (Hersey & Stinson, 1980).

To foster participation, the director will need to promote the success of every individual on the staff, show them respect and trust, and help them learn and grow so that they can contribute to the vision and achieve what is envisioned (see Nanus, 1992, p. 15). The director likely will need to assist those with less experience and less confidence (see Williams, 1995.) At the same time, each person — newcomers and veterans alike — will need to sense that he or she is part of the team and can make valuable contributions that will help the group excel.

A unique and positive identity for the group can set it apart, projecting an image, for example, of active professionals operating on the cutting edge. Concurrently, this distinction of uniqueness may function to associate the group with other top performers in the field. Such an identity can instill a healthy pride and sense of responsibility that will motivate performance (see Nanus, 1992, p. 49).

Group consciousness should extend beyond the instructors of the course. A director likely will benefit from inviting the

participation of the department. Devising a vision with the department participating in its creation will allow the department as a whole to be more familiar with the operation of the course, its high goals, and the dedication of the director to achieve those high goals. Their involvement will assure them that the director welcomes their participation in refining the course and mentoring the staff. Likewise, the staff will feel more valuable and included; they will be able to view themselves as an integral part of the department's mission. Inclusion may be especially helpful for adjunct faculty who may feel isolated (see Arden, 1995).

On Track for Excellence

In addition to group consciousness and collegiality, a vision helps a group to excel. A vision allows the group to identify its mission(s) and the goals involved and to begin to devise and execute strategies for accomplishing specific goals (see Nanus, 1992, p. 54). As goals and strategies are identified, ambiguity decreases, allowing the "abilities" and "skills" (Salazar, 1995, p. 179) of a group's members to come more fully into play. Equipped with such a keen sense of direction, the group may surprise even itself with a more than optimum performance (see Salazar, 1995).

As such, the vision and its various components enable participants to perform well and with the confidence that they are contributing significantly to the enterprise and that their contributions will be recognized and appreciated (see Nanus, 1992, pp. 17-19). This sense of accomplishment is both satisfying and motivational. In this manner, the vision will "impel" group members "strongly to action" (Bormann, 1972, p. 398).

The process of visioning not only provides initial direction but it also provides redirection when needed. As Nanus (1992) observes: "Vision plays an important role not only in the start-up phase of an organization but throughout the organization's

entire life cycle" (p. 9). Visioning becomes an ongoing public forum where participants air their concerns and voice their views and ideas. They are actively involved and "colleagues" in the truest sense of the word, helping to define the principles, standards and values which will direct specific behaviors and overall performance. Ideally, the vision will constantly undergo scrutiny and examination, with the staff actively involved. When fundamental change is needed, visioning is the process for detecting strengths and deficiencies and establishing a new direction or a transformation.

Public Relations Function

Whereas stories often are exchanged internally and thus are insulated from the outside (Brown, 1990), a vision may be very visible — and desirably so. As Nanus (1992) observes, a vision's power is "its ability to grab the attention of those both inside and outside the organization" (p. 16). The group is a rhetorical community whose discourse gets noticed for its eloquent, compelling ideas and the vivid images as to who they are, what they are about, and where they are going. Just as a vision provides clarity for its members it can function likewise for outsiders.

The vision can enhance the integrity of the course as well as the reputation of the department. The vision should be discernible in the course description and the stated goals of the course, apparent to students and to anyone who would peruse the syllabus. Members of the university community — administrators as well as other departments — who become aware of the goals of the course should appreciate the commitment to education that it displays. In addition, the vision likely will motivate student appreciation and performance. Granted, students still may not derive great pleasure or excitement from assignments or grading criteria, but it is more likely that they will "take them seriously, find them

meaningful and worthwhile, and try to get the intended benefit from them" (Brophy, 1983, p. 200). Upon completion of the course, the vision that has been imparted should provide students with a sense of closure as well as enable them to better assess what they have gained, and it may even motivate them to enroll in other departmental courses (see Yoder, 1993).

In sum, a vision is story-like in function, but whereas a story is specific to a single value or strategy or some other aspect, a vision offers an all-encompassing view of the enterprise. It provides a context for interpreting stories and any other information, and it also provides a link back to the whole. The vision functions, as do stories, to provide proof of the group's uniqueness and the value of its contribution (see Brown, 1990, p. 178), but it broadcasts these images externally as well, in a public relations capacity. Given its pervasiveness, it is little wonder that Nanus (1992) views the vision as central to success, contending: "When it comes to leading an organization, there is nothing so necessary as the right vision, widely shared" (p. 22).

ORCHESTRATING A HEALTHY VISION

As one takes on the role of course director, he or she inherits a vision for the course, whether it be deliberate or latent/unimagined, productive or counterproductive, fuzzy or well-defined. As the director works to influence an "improved" vision, he or she can utilize the eloquence and credibility of others to present various, potentially attractive ideas. A survey of others' visions (as shown in the introduction to this paper) can provide invaluable insight. As Bormann et. al. (1994) note, "a rhetorical vision can be artistically stitched together from several strong but competing visions" (p. 277). Many of the best ideas, though, likely will come from within as the group contemplates its specific program and its partic-

ular opportunities and constraints. In addition to ongoing dialogue, a steady survey of relevant literature and regular interaction with other, interested colleagues likely will supply new ideas that a group may incorporate into their vision.

Since a vision is multi-faceted and interconnected, the group will contemplate a number of elements and their relationships. At minimum, a vision for the basic course includes images of the group, the director, and the individual member of the staff, as well as images of the course, and images of what will assist the group's endeavors and bolster their performance. The vision also features a nonverbal component: an incarnation or enactment of what is envisioned.

Images of Those Involved

As noted, identity of the group and the individual comprises one element within a vision. Identity would constitute what Burke (1945/1969a) terms "agent," to designate *who* performs the act and what kind of person or people they are. Attributes for those involved might include "professional," "ambitious," and "interdependent." "Professional" suggests that the member/group meets responsibilities competently and in a manner that is fair, courteous, and often exceeding the call of duty. "Ambitious" suggests a commitment to excellence and to ongoing development. "Interdependency" emphasizes the importance of teamwork and cooperation (see Covey, 1989, p. 50); the individual will have accountability to the group that he or she will contribute actively, will appreciate others' contributions, and will safeguard the integrity of the enterprise.

Interdependency has implications for the director, as well, suggesting that the director will involve the staff actively in a diagnosis of the course and decisions pertaining to curriculum, policy, and design. In addition to conferring with the staff to gain their assessment, interdependency suggests that

the director will survey the relevant literature regarding curriculum and methods of instruction and also will enlist the expertise of colleagues outside of the group, emphasizing to them the desirability of their involvement.

The concept of interdependency prompts the director and others who wish to influence to actively seek out information that will yield well-grounded ideas. A vision, as Nanus (1992) notes, is a realistic dream, "built upon information and knowledge" (p. 34). In the process of visioning (as discussed above), an informed voice likely will be better able to influence perceptions and attitudes about the course as well as to successfully advocate items for the agenda or to successfully advocate a particular action or policy. Furthermore, by soliciting input the director will spark the process of visioning by actively involving others and encouraging their participation.

Images of the Course

Images of the course are akin to what Burke (1945/1969a) labels "act," referring to *what* takes place. This aspect of the vision might include what is done for the student in the course, what is done for the instructor of the course, and what is done for the department, the institution, and society. Images of the course would also include what Burke identifies as "purpose," that is, explanations as to *why* the act is performed.

Notions about the course reside at the center of the vision: The course must be valued if it is to be appreciated and supported. In nurturing a positive image for the course the group will be constrained by the department's notions of the course and — as with any rhetor — must operate within those constraints as well as recognize the opportunities. For example, the department ideally values the course and its place in the curriculum. Ideally, too, the department recognizes its visibility on campus and has concerns for its integrity. Such

factors suggest a vision of the course as important and making a solid contribution that others will appreciate. These notions would provide opportunities for the director to suggest changes that would align more closely with the vision. If this alignment was not immediately obvious, the director would have to explain the fit. If the existent vision is less than ideal or short-sighted and, as a result, provides little opportunity to suggest change, the director will have to negotiate modifications to the vision by offering up a fresh, compelling view with which others can agree, appreciate, and assist in developing (Conger, 1989).

In articulating the value of the course and its contribution to the curriculum, the group can supplement their descriptions with the eloquence and ethos of others. For example, when reflecting upon how the course is central to students' education and nurtures more than presentational skills, Stephen Lucas (1996) observes that "item after item of what we demand [from students in the basic course]" equals a "checklist for critical thinking." Lucas insists that the thinking and writing demanded in the composition of speeches and critiques [and other papers] make our course the "moral and intellectual equivalent of a composition course." He notes that the course enjoys such esteem at the University of Wisconsin; students there may take the basic course in public speaking to fulfill their composition requirement.

Michael Osborn (1996) offers a similar conception of the basic course along with additional insights. Osborn holds that a course in public speaking "nourishes — or ought to nourish — creativity in students" because it "encourages originality of language, thought, and expression as students explore themselves and their worlds in classroom speeches." Furthermore, Osborn notes, we provide our students with "the gift of a sense of form." Osborn underscores the importance of form, contending: "Understanding the orderly development of ideas is . . . central to that awareness that we call higher education." Osborn also observes that when we teach students to

"weave evidence into proofs, and proofs into compelling arguments" they not only are learning the various elements of proof but are "also learning how to appeal to the very essence of what it means to be human."

In addition to envisioning what we do for our students, our vision can note the centrality of our course in serving society. The public speaking classroom constitutes a public forum where we can contemplate some of the most pressing issues of our time — including many that never make the headlines! The classroom becomes a place where we exchange and evaluate information and ideas. And as we discuss communication and its role in creating and sustaining society, we promote a greater appreciation for communication and involvement. When communicating with their peers, students assume the roles of advocate and consumer, and if we can enhance their ability to wield influence and to listen critically we may instill in them the confidence and sense of responsibility and duty to become more engaged, at home, at work, and in the community. And we may also help them to view others (even those who are "different") as able to contribute and worthy of our best efforts to listen to them and to empathize with their point of view. In short, we are helping to prepare an active, watchful, caring and able citizenry who have a strong sense of ethics, duty, and accountability.

To visualize the course in this manner and to approach it with a true reverence for these outcomes is to increase the likelihood of success. Surely TAs, adjuncts, lecturers, and professors — whoever teaches the course — can respect and respond to such a vision. Rather than view the teaching assignment as having been saddled with a lowly or undesirable task, we can view it as an opportunity to assist students' development and to make a significant and very honorable and important contribution. Animated by reverence and pride, we can excel. And no doubt our vision and enthusiasm will motivate our students and inspire/amaze others who look on.

We might also heed the philosopher's words that "where there is no vision, the people perish" (see Proverbs 29:9). As individual departments and as a field it may prove fruitful to recognize the centrality of the basic course in the undergraduate curriculum. As Osborn (1996) observes, if we confine our vision of the basic course to "superficial skills," that kind of orientation "can trivialize all that we do . . . and make us vulnerable when the pressure to cut programs arises. In this sense idealistic goals may not only be ethically attractive — they may also be quite practical." Jim Chesebro (1996) offers, more emphatically, that such a vision may determine "our survival" (p. 2).

In addition to envisioning and emphasizing the virtues of the course, the vision can encourage a healthy perspective for undergraduate students and their education. McMillan and Cheney (1996) caution against a view of the student as "consumer," noting how that view — among other things — "inappropriately compartmentalizes the educational experience as a product rather than a process" (p. 7) and "reinforces individualism at the expense of community" (p. 9). A better mindset, they suggest, is that of "critical engagement" (p.12) where the student is conceived of as a "stakeholder" in the educational experience. Sprague and Nyquist (1991) observe similarly, finding that the "most effective teachers are highly engaged with their students as individuals and are emotionally involved in their success or failures" (p. 309); these instructors have "internalized the notion of 'client' and will talk about students in terms of student needs and the impact of instruction." To engage this perspective, they note, instructors will need to "transcend or set aside their own ego needs and defensiveness" and recognize each student as unique and deserving of good faith and optimism coupled with high expectations.

The vision could also impart how teaching the basic course is valuable to graduate students. In this view teaching does not detract from a TA's study but is an arena for growth.

Teaching the course will sharpen and test their own command of the concepts they encounter in their studies. They will be developing a deeper understanding of those individual concepts as well as how they fit into a larger scheme and manifest themselves in common experience. With this advanced understanding will come a greater ability to converse with other scholars in the field as well as relate this knowledge to the layperson — something the teacher must be able to do. As Nyquist and Sprague (1992) have explained, the "postsocialized" scholar is "able to translate and communicate even the most specialized knowledge to others outside the field and make complex concepts clear to learners new to the discipline" (p. 109).

The director could challenge the staff to envision how teaching the course can complement their studies as well as equip them for success. For example, they will have experience to enter on their vita as well as the opportunity to establish a solid track record that will enable their supervisor to write a solid recommendation that points to specific, desirable qualities they have developed, their success as an instructor, and the various contributions they have made.

As Nanus (1992) observes, the "right vision attracts commitment and energizes people. People seem to need and want something they can commit to, a significant challenge worthy of their best efforts" (1992, p. 16). In the case of TAs, they already are challenged by graduate school and have a vision of success. The vision of the basic course can be a part of that *same* vision. It can be shown to fit into the overall scheme of their education and development. The skills and experiences they have developed and refined as teachers will transfer to other contexts (e.g., leadership) and will comprise an important part of their graduate experience and education.

For adjuncts and other instructors, the course must challenge them as well. In addition to involving them by having them "assist in the development of common examinations and assignments" (Hugenberg, 1993, p. 170), the direc-

tor could actively challenge them to continuously envision and build a better course and one that will be more efficient for all involved. They must know that their ideas and experiences are needed and valued and will help to improve the course. They must see that they are a part of something "big" and very worthwhile.

A new perspective may also be in order for junior and senior faculty in the department. The "bread and butter" metaphor that has long-ruled many departments is not the most healthy conception, suggesting a purely economic motive for offering the basic course. A more productive view is that the basic course is a place where ideas are tested and where the next generation of scholars receive an introduction to the field (as undergraduates) and gain competence (as graduates). In this manner, as Sprague (1992) suggests, departments could envision the basic course as a laboratory for testing theories and ideas, and as a place that could benefit from the expertise, insight, and involvement of all of the faculty.

Images of What Will Assist

Images of what will assist the staff involves what Burke (1945/1969a) describes as the "scene," pertaining to the context, and "agency," referring to what means and methods are conducive to success. In terms of the scene, a context that promotes success is one in which training and ongoing development are appreciated, supported, & valued. Departmental support is essential for success. In a study of training programs for TAs; Susan Ambrose (1991) found that *ineffective* programs exhibited "two clearly recognizable problems" (p. 166), both of which involved apparent apathy by the faculty.

In order to facilitate healthy notions regarding training within the overall vision for the basic course, the director may need to be proactive, acquainting colleagues with the theory

and scholarship that points to the *necessity* of ongoing training, its various components, and its demands (see Williams, 1995). The director might emphasize the value of ongoing training — how it assists mastery, confidence and professionalism and how it helps TAs to discern their value and how it instills an enduring commitment to ongoing development. The director might also note how providing a context for a continuing dialogue can improve performance as well as relations. Perhaps most compelling, though, are the findings that, when surveyed, teaching assistants recognized the need and benefits of training and requested such support (see Buerkel-Rothfuss & Gray, 1990; also see Kaufman-Everett & Backlund, 1981).

Clearly, the department that values the course will likely be more prone to support efforts to improve instruction; the relationship is obvious. Less obvious is what comprises an effective regimen for training and development. In other words, what means, methods, and conditions foster success?

A successful regimen employs both formal and informal means. For example, departments often provide a formal orientation for incoming TAs to help them assume their roles with a higher degree of competence and confidence. Many programs have found that a follow-up class for new TAs makes it realistic to assign reading and assignments that will facilitate reflection. Current practices are many and varied (see Lambert & Tice, 1993); the director has to work within the constraints and opportunities present in the department and at the institution. Some programs might allow a one hour class whereas others support a three hour class. The class might be confined to the first semester, or it might span two or more. Other departments creatively devise an unofficial class if they face constraints that prohibit or make problematic an official offering. Whatever the director is able to do, he or she might promote departmental involvement and support by having the department head or curriculum committee to

critique a proposed syllabus. Once the syllabus has been constructed, the director might circulate it for all to see.

In addition to orientation and a class for new TAs, other formal means of training typically pursued include observations of teaching and a follow-up conference with the instructor as well as meetings with the entire staff to diagnose the current state of affairs (see Andrews, 1983). Informal means often entail such practices as "small talk" (described above), an "open door" policy, and social gatherings to promote groupness and collegiality.

In order to devise a successful context for training and development, directors may have to articulate the obvious: A successful regimen must be informed. The director can underscore the importance of scholarship and how it is integral to success as a director. The director can emphasize that just as any professor can enhance instruction via researching and writing, so can the course director improve his or her knowledge and expertise. Part of the vision, then, for the basic course includes a statement pertaining to the director's own need to be informed so that she or he can perform well and can assist the performance of others. Furthermore, as an active scholar the director can help inform others similarly engaged, making a valuable contribution to the discipline and perhaps even to interdisciplinary efforts to improve TA training and development. To do so requires the support and encouragement of the department and the institution with the understanding that they will recognize those endeavors as scholarly. This type of evaluation would constitute a return to a paradigm of scholarship that includes pedagogical research, a move that Boyer (1991a) has urged. The academy might also recognize that quality textbooks and responsible reviews likewise are vital to the health and reputation of a field, not only for educating the masses and acquainting them with the merits of a discipline, but also for providing a solid foundation for those who will pursue graduate study.

When contemplating such matters, John Rodden (1993) does not equivocate: "I have a dream of a field that values equally the different contributions teaching and scholarship make to life; that values equally the different contributions teachers and scholars make to lives; that respects research in whatever form it may take, from the innovative new course to the well-crafted lecture to the stimulating journal article" (p. 134).

A Voice and Embodiment

To negotiate and perpetuate a healthy vision, the director (and others within the rhetorical community) must personify the vision (Conger, 1989). Traditional wisdom tells us that "talk is cheap" and "actions speak louder than words." What we know intuitively is borne out in studies; generally speaking, people *do* rely more frequently on nonverbal codes than on verbal messages (Burgoon, J., 1985, pp. 346-47). Hence the director must be one of deeds as well as words. The director "passionately 'lives the vision'" (Nanus, 1992, p. 14) and works diligently (alone and with others) to establish a knowledge base that will inform efforts to ever-build a better course and one that incorporates and reflects the latest findings regarding the subject, methods of instruction, and ways to train and nurture the development of staff.

The director might personify a vision through research, perhaps contributing to the literature to enhance collective understanding. The director's example likely will engender the respect of students, staff, and department, and it should make more compelling the vision the director would put forward. Similarly, the director can personify via active involvement and association with like-minded individuals and with groups both at his or her respective institution as well as with regional and national affiliations.

Through words and deeds the director and the group can impart a compelling vision (see Nanus, p. 15). Likewise, the department can, through its actions, convey the vision. The department assists with the creation of a positive vision by supporting the director and group and also by modeling camaraderie and serving as mentors. Departmental support of the director's endeavors to train and to facilitate ongoing development will validate the director's efforts and likely will predispose the staff to active involvement, as well as enhance their commitment to their role and to continuing professional development. In short, the department (as with any participant) must, to some degree, personify the vision.

CONCLUSION

The effectiveness and efficiency of the basic course depends, in large measure, upon a vision for the course and for the staff — a commonly shared mind-set pertaining to what the group is about and where it is going. A vision surfaces in the group's words and deeds as they continually define and redefine their purpose, direction, and goals, and as they evaluate their performance. The anatomy of a vision helps to explain its power and appeal; people participate in its creation and enact what they have created; they are a rhetorical community within which the course director is one voice but may occupy a first-author type status. The vision and the process of visioning helps to forge group consciousness and dedication to the enterprise, reflecting the current practice/emphasis upon participative leadership (see Huey, 1994). A vision also helps to clarify tasks, enabling peak performance, and it acquaints outsiders with the group and its endeavors in a manner likely to foster respect and appreciation.

Studies in leadership, communication and rhetoric each contribute to an understanding of vision — how it is formed

and its various functions. Visions occur naturally, but certain conditions must exist for a healthy vision to emerge and operate. The leader will need engage, in part at least, a participative style of leadership and have an ability to encourage and facilitate involvement and visioning. It also will help if the leader is one whom others recognize as credible, well-intended, and capable (see Conger, 1989, p. 94). Widespread, active participation and creativity by the staff likewise is essential. In addition, the director and group will benefit from departmental support and involvement.

In part, too, the group is dependent upon the academic community. Colleagues and administrators must recognize their interdependency with those who oversee the basic course and how that scholarship can improve instruction in the basic course as well as efforts to train and develop staff. If academe marginalizes education, it risks prompting students to devalue education, perceiving of a college degree as merely a hoop or hurdle — a formality prerequisite to a job. To meet accountability to students would be to again be inspired by what Ernest Boyer (1991b) has identified as the "colonial college tradition" which "emphasized the student, general education, . . . and the centrality of teaching" (p. 4). This mind-set might strengthen the academy's commitment to equipping those who provide the instruction and recognizing and rewarding the endeavors and scholarship of those charged with the duty.

Vision plays a central role in the basic course, helping to determine its degree of success and the support it will receive from the department and institution. A fruitful vision enhances perceptions of the course and engenders the support necessary for the training and development of instructors and the scholarship that will assist those endeavors as well as enhance instruction. A healthy vision, coupled with superior performance, will help the basic course to become so respected and so valued that it ensures the prestige of the course within

the department, on campus, and ultimately in the field, across disciplines, and in the community at large.

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